

Cornhuskers get kicks as Tigers tumble 30-7

By Rob Falkoff
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Nebraska had a Bummerooski and Missouri had a bummer of a football game.

That combination of events helped the third-ranked Cornhuskers gain a surprisingly easy 30-7 victory over the Tigers Saturday afternoon at Faurot Field before 68,195 fans and a national television audience.

It was Missouri's first home loss since the 1973 Oklahoma game and ironically, the kicking game proved to be the biggest pitfall for the Tigers — as it was in the Sooner game two years ago.

A blocked punt, a fumbled punt and a bizarre fake punt which resulted in a Nebraska touchdown completely shot down the Tigers' hopes for a third straight victory over the Huskers.

With the Huskers leading 3-0 in the first quarter, defensive end Ray Phillips broke came through untouched to block a Jim Goble punt on the Missouri 18. Three plays later quarterback Vince Ferragamo hit tight end Brad Jenkins for a 10-yard touchdown and the Tigers were under the gun early 10-0.

But Missouri came back in the second quarter to march 42 yards for a score behind the passing of quarterback Steve Pisarkiewicz. The Tigers got a break when a Nebraska defender was called for interfering with slotback Joe Stewart at the 1-yard line and tailback Tony Galbreath, who still isn't running well because of an ankle injury, scored on the next play.

Missouri was back in the ballgame

despite the fact that Nebraska had controlled the line of scrimmage throughout the game to that point.

Then Husker coach Tom Osborne decided to pull a little post-Halloween trickery on the Tigers. He sent in the Bummerooski. And no, that's not the name of a big fullback — it's a fake punt play which Nebraska assistant coach Jerry Moore learned when he coached at Southern Methodist University some years ago.

With the Huskers leading 10-7 and with 1:46 remaining in the first half, Nebraska lined up in punt formation on fourth and five from the Missouri 40. The ball was snapped to blocking back Tony Davis, who then handed it forward through the legs of another blocking back — John O'Leary.

O'Leary covered the ball with both hands and stood in his tracks as the rest of the Husker team swept to the right side. When the confused Missouri team followed the flow, the sneaky O'Leary tip-toed off to the left and then ran 40 yards untouched for a touchdown.

"We've had it in there all year and we were just waiting for the right time to use it," Osborne said of the deceptive play which gave Nebraska a 16-7 lead and the momentum. "That play saved the first half for us."

"Coach Osborne called it at the right time and we had good execution on the fake punt," O'Leary said. "One of their defensive linemen end Bob McRoberts went right by me and I thought he was gonna tackle me."

McRoberts gave his version of the play in the somber Missouri dressing room.

"He ran right into me," McRoberts

said. "I just didn't throw my arms around him. I shed him because I thought he was a blocker. It all happened so fast."

"It was a great play which was the turning point of the game as far as I'm concerned," Nebraska athletic director and former head coach Bob Devaney said.

"We used it a couple of years ago against Wisconsin and it didn't work but this was a great time for it. A little farther back would have been too much of a gamble and if we'd been a little closer, Tom (Coyle) would have tried a field goal."

So faster than you can say Bummerooski, Nebraska was back in control.

Then in the second half, Missouri suffered phase three of the kicking game breakdown and the Huskers capitalized again. Little Leo Lewis, who came into the game as the nation's fourth best punt returner, fumbled a wobbly Randy Lessman punt at the Missouri 37 and Nebraska recovered. Husker quarterback Vince Ferragamo passed to split end Bobby Thomas on the first play for a touchdown and a 23-7 Nebraska lead.

Missouri coach Al Onofrio refused to fault Lewis, who has broken two punt returns for touchdowns this season.

"Don't fault Leo. He's caught everything that's been kicked to him," Onofrio said. "They (the team) are supposed to continue playing football and not let anything affect them."

The fact is, Missouri let a lot of things affect it Saturday. The two breakdowns on kicking game and the Bummerooski play were the biggest

factors in the Nebraska victory.

But there were other, more subtle reasons for the 30-7 final score. As in their loss to Michigan, Missouri didn't execute as well as it is capable — offensively or defensively. These were some of the major problems:

— Missouri had a disorganized offense Saturday. Several times the plays were sent in late. The Tigers were penalized only once for delay of game, but on other occasions Pisarkiewicz had to rush in order to get off a play;

— the Tigers' five costly penalties (some in key situations) which further slowed their offense;

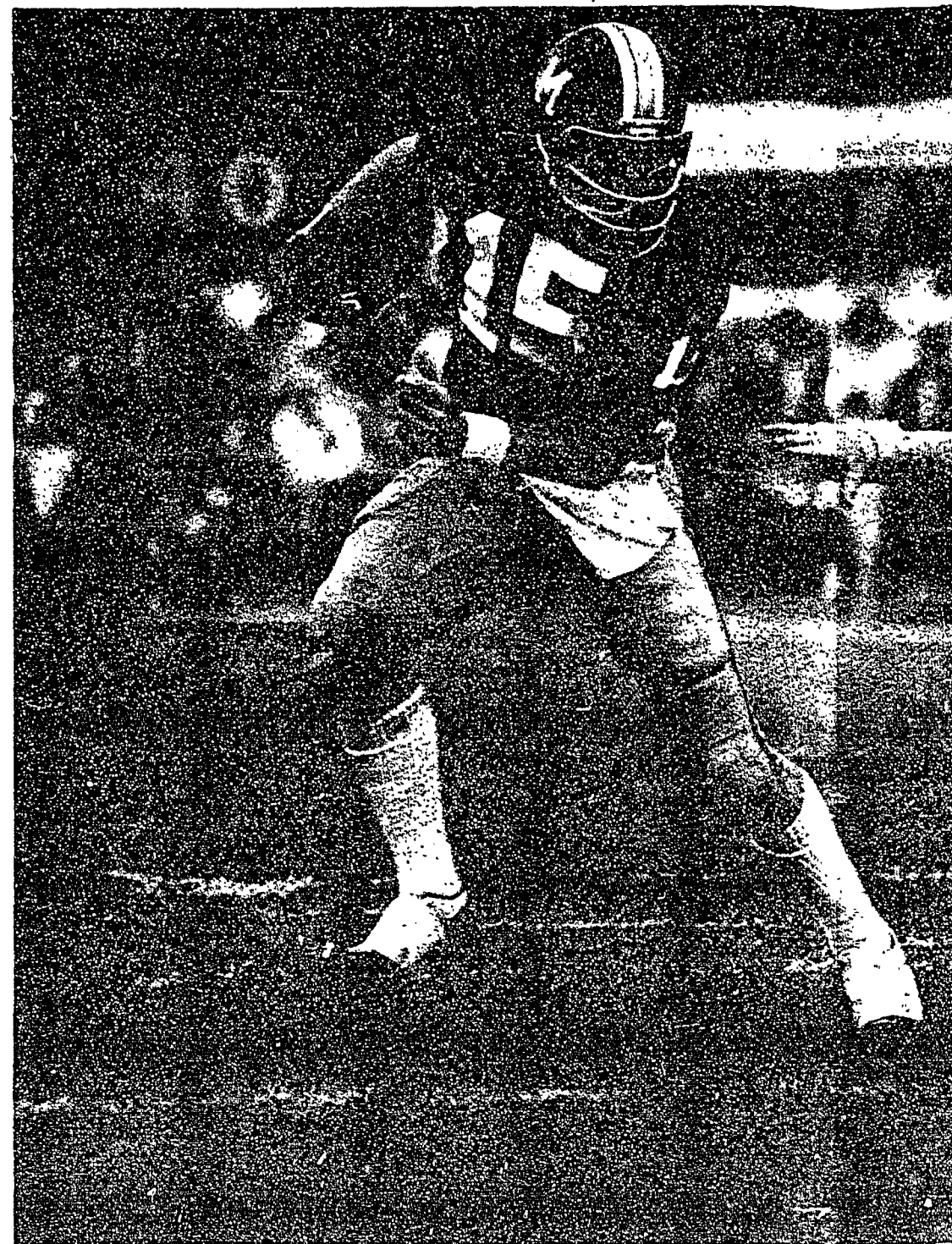
— whereas Nebraska established a running game, Missouri never did. Therefore, Nebraska defensive lineman could play the pass on every play and as a result Pisarkiewicz was sacked nine times for losses of 55 yards. Missouri's longest gain on first down was six yards, while the Huskers established ball control with repeated six-seven- and eight-yard gains on first down;

— Nebraska planned to test Tiger cornerback Rob Fitzgerald and did so effectively. Husker diminutive split end Bobby Thomas burned Fitzgerald on touchdown bombs of 37 and 61 yards;

— Pisarkiewicz lacked the pinpoint accuracy he had shown in previous games and in addition, he had at least four passes dropped.

— Husker noseguard John Lee made eight tackles and handled the Missouri centers effectively, both on running and passing plays.

Overall, it was a subpar Missouri effort against Nebraska team which (See TIGERS, Page 11)



Missouri quarterback Steve Pisarkiewicz gets away from Nebraska defense.



Tigers get kicked by Huskers

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obviously deserves its No. 3 national ranking.

"We always seem to make the big plays," said Husker safety Dave Butterfield, who intercepted a Pisarkiewicz third-quarter pass near the goal line to virtually ice the game.

"The blocked punt and the fake punt touchdown gave us the momentum we

needed. That's the great thing about this team. We're able to make a big play and it's somebody different each week."

"Right now, this team looks as good offensively and defensively as our national championship team in 1971," Devaney said.

"I think it'll boil down to that Oklahoma game at Norman for the Big Eight championship and maybe the nation's cup."

For the Tigers, it's back to the drawing board.

"We have a lot of work to do this week," Missouri split end Henry Marshall said. "We have to start getting ready mentally for next Saturday at Iowa State."

That means forgetting about the Bummerooski play and the bumper football game which disappointed Tiger fans across the country.